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# Musical Dialect: Tradition, Heritage and the Language of the Vernacular

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A commentary on recent compositional works

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts by Research



Abstract

The main aim of the project was to write a set of compositions exploring the ideas of heritage, tradition and vernacular in music, with a view to creating a personal and authentic musical style. To achieve this, I have looked at my musical influences (heritage) and actively included them in composition. The main influences explored in the project include, heavy and progressive metal of many varieties, folk music, barbershop music and choral art music.

I have researched the ideas of tradition in modern composition by studying the works of other contemporary composers to see what aspects of tradition they retain. I have also looked at tradition within the genres of my musical heritage and incorporated traditional aspects and clichés of those styles into my own composition, whilst working to create my own musical dialect that incorporates my linguistic vernacular.

This thesis contains in-depth analysis of the compositions in this project whilst relating them to the music that has inspired me. It also contains the result of research I have done into themes that feature throughout my works.

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Word count: 14226



## I. List of Works

### The Vernacular Set

*Vernacular 1: Treftadaeth* for solo Soprano (ca. 7')

*Vernacular 2: ShittyBusPoems* for Barbershop Quartet (ca. 3')

*Vernacular 3: Cambria* for Percussion Quartet, SATB Quartet and Pianist (ca. 7')

*Vernacular 4: MetaAsFuck* for Barbershop Quartet (ca. 4'30")

*Vernacular 5: Jigsaw* for SATB Choir (ca. 5')

*Vernacular 5: Jigsaw* for Double SATB Choir (ca. 5')

*Vernacular 6: The Olive Grove* for SATB Choir with *divisi* (ca. 4')

### Other Works

*Lamentations* for SSSSAATTBB Choir (ca. 4'30")

*Sadness and Joy* for SATB Quartet (ca. 3'30")

Total: ca. 43'30"



## II. Introduction

The study of tradition, heritage and vernacular is an extension of the original topic of this project: tonality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The nature of this work changed as I began to write the first piece; it became clear that more traditional aspects of music interested me than just tonality. The new topic came from a question of why I write the music I do, especially when considering that I am so interested in heavy metal and folk music.

From the age of 14 I wrote music as a guitarist and singer in a heavy metal band, and that was solely where my interests lay. Writing music was completely aural for me at that time, as I had no musical education. An interest in Western art music is only something I have had for the last six years, when I started to study music at A level. In class, we were encouraged to write music within the broad spectrum of Western art music, which essentially meant composition using orchestral instruments. Due to this I wrote music that I thought I should write, and it largely ignored my interests outside of art music.

Therefore the purpose of this project became to cultivate a more personal musical dialect, which reflected who I am. To do this I decided to consciously incorporate musical interests outside of art music into my composition. I studied aspects of tradition, heritage and vernacular in relation to the music I write and the music I like.

### Tradition

Tradition was chosen as a key word for the project as I believed my work had much in common with music of the Western art tradition before the 21<sup>st</sup> century and

I was interested to discover to what extent my music relates to other contemporary composers. Tradition manifests itself in my music by my use of tonality, non-complex rhythmic language, the use of parody (as an understanding of a genre's tradition is necessary to parody), the instrumental forces I have written for, and the fact that my music is written with a concert hall performance in mind.

### Heritage

Heritage refers to the genres that I have incorporated into my music, with relation to specific artists. With regard to metal, progressive metal is the main influence. Bands like Dream Theater and Nevermore use irregular meters and changing time signatures, which are the main aspects I take from their music.<sup>1</sup> I am also interested in folk music, namely that of Seth Lakeman, which has primarily increased my interest in modality. Folk has also inspired the use of drones and open fifth harmonies, which are parodied in *Treftadaeth* and *Sadness and Joy* respectively.

There are four composers that I consider main influences from Western art music: Ralph Vaughan Williams, Maurice Ravel, Benjamin Britten and Howard Skempton. Vaughan Williams and Ravel occupy a similar space in my mind, as I am mostly interested in their instrumental music. Their inclusion of folk and jazz into their styles is something that helped me think more inventively when incorporating influences into my musical dialect.

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<sup>1</sup> 'This Godless Endeavour' by Nevermore has a section from 5'30" in 7/4. 'Stream of Consciousness' by Dream Theater uses 5/4 during the introduction and their song 'Dance of Eternity' uses changing meters throughout.

Influences through Britten and Skempton can be found in my vocal writing. Britten is the main motivation for the use of wholetone harmonies and Skempton has taught me about using natural word stress to create interesting meters.

Heritage also refers to my heritage as an English-speaking Welshman which is referenced in a few works in the portfolio.

### Vernacular

*Treftadaeth*, the first composition of this project, explored my linguistic identity. This led me to change the project somewhat and continue this idea by writing a larger set of works that focused on the writings of my friends, named *Vernacular*. I thought it was important that this set contained modern English (*Treftadaeth* being the only exception) and the type of language that I speak (including my penchant for crude language and humour) to write authentic music that paints a picture of who I am. However, this portfolio does contain two works outside the *Vernacular* set that use older texts, but they still explore vernacular in different ways.

This year, I have also been developing my musical vernacular or dialect to create my own style. My harmonic language is based on diatonicism, modality, wholetone scales and occasionally tonality (only when it serves a particular purpose). Elements of bimodality and bitonality are also used. Predominantly my music is technically atonal, but there are occasions where I use atonality without modality or diatonicism, mainly for the purposes of word painting.

Another harmonic technique I use consists of major and minor triads, often with extensions, without focus on a tonal or diatonic structure; the harmonies are picked

for their vertical sonority. There is no tonality in these sections, though sometimes a sense of tonality is suggested.

### III. Discussion of themes

Before discussing the works included in this portfolio, we will look at some of the other themes explored in them.

#### Humour and Parody

Investigating the subject of humour in art music, the oft-cited piece is Mozart's *A Musical Joke*. An issue with this work is that the humour is dated and requires an understanding of music. The irregular phrase length in the first movement is something that is commonplace today and the "out of tune" horn part in the second movement sounds like something Ravel might have written, and he has already been dead nearly 80 years. The humour in *Vernacular 2* and *4*, my haikus for barbershop quartet, is simple and derived from lyrics and word painting, meaning that knowledge of music is not necessary to understand the humour.

In *Cambria*, humour is found through the use of bizarre lyrics, namely setting an Earth Science Masters thesis. The use of unusual lyrics in an art music context is explored in a few pieces:

- Benjamin Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb*, is the setting of a text by Christopher Smart. The text tells of how all things worship God in their own way, including the poet's cat Geoffrey. Though the piece does paint a poignant message, the lyrics are still bizarre and humorous.
- *Jenk's Vegetable Compound*<sup>2</sup> by Victorian composer James Cartwright Macy is a secular motet that sets mock testimonials for a miracle vegetable compound said to cure any malady.
- 'The Highway Code' and 'The Weather Forecast'<sup>3</sup> are songs by The Master Singers, an English vocal quartet in the 1960s. They are settings of mundane

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<sup>2</sup> Not a lot is known about this work. It was recorded in 1980 by the King's Singers and is no longer commercially available, but can still be heard online (noochinator2, 2013).

lyrics in the style of psalm Anglican chants. These pieces also parody religious music, like *Cambria*, and connect with *Vernacular 2* and *4* as humorous works for vocal quartet.

Humour in pop music is not uncommon. ‘Weird Al’ Yankovic is a parody artist known for taking existing songs and attaching his own lyrics to them, making fun of the original artist or lyrics. An example of this is his song ‘Smells like Nirvana’ which parodies Nirvana’s ‘Smells like Teen Spirit’ by questioning its unintelligible lyrics and the mumbling vocal style of singer Kurt Cobain. Yankovic has also parodied genres, as I do with my pseudo-barbershop works. His song ‘Angry White Boy Polka’ makes a polka medley from various rock and nu metal songs.

Another source of humour found in pop music includes the use of crude lyrics and coarse language. Tenacious D is a band well-known for this. They have many songs with crude descriptions of sexual activity, like the song ‘Kielbasa’, which uses a kielbasa sausage as a metaphor for the penis, as the singer describes his appendage’s many uses. Whilst the humour in my music is not necessarily crude, humour is derived from the use of swearing.

*Heynonnynonny Smallprint*, by Geoffrey Poole, is an art music vocal solo that uses modern vernacular to create humour. ‘Hey Nonny Nonny’ is a Shakespearean phrase that has links to the British folk song tradition (Schamehorn, 2010) and is used throughout Poole’s piece for that reason. The work is a modern version of a folk love song, telling the story of a man meeting up with a McDonald’s employee on a street and trying to initiate a relationship with her. It includes pop-culture references such as a beatbox-style impersonation of the girl’s Walkman and mixes modern

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<sup>3</sup> Again, recordings of these works are not commercially available, but they can be heard online (Huizing, 2007 [a] and [b]).

English (including swearing) with older English (like the use of the word ‘quoth’ instead of ‘said’).

Humour has aided me in creating a personal style because it has allowed me to put more of my personality into my music. Even though humour is not used in every piece, it has still played an important role in this body of work.

### The ‘twist’

Most of the works in this portfolio contain some sort of ‘twist’, where a piece masquerades as one thing but then changes stylistically or develops some meaning that was at first unclear. This is a way of reconciling what I see as a contradiction of influences within my works.

The twists are as follows:

- *Treftadaeth* begins like a folk-inspired song, but as the piece goes on it becomes clear that metal is the work’s main influence.
- *ShittyBusPoems* and *MetaAsFuck* sound as though they may be barbershop works, but the lyrics and harmonies reveal that they are parodies.
- *Cambria* sounds like a mixture of minimalism and modern choral music, but the real inspiration behind the work is the metal genre djent.
- *The Olive Grove* sounds like a regular choral piece but the twist is that the piece is based on singer-songwriter lyrics and is inspired by pop music in form.
- *Sadness and Joy* suddenly changes in the middle section to a mixture of folk and progressive metal.
- *Lamentations* seems to be a religious choral work, but it is a commentary on the use of vernacular in church music and is founded on heavy metal.

## Collaboration

Collaboration has become an important aspect of my pieces this year as I have worked with text writers and singers throughout the project. Five pieces were written with specific performers in mind, including the settings of the haikus, which were for my own barbershop quartet. This is important because as pieces are rehearsed small aspects tend to change, and issues of performance that might otherwise go unnoticed are spotted and performers may bring in their own ideas of interpretation. Also, writing for specific people allows pieces to be tailored to those performers, which can create a more effective work.

Working with the barbershop quartet ensured that the humour of the works was successful. In rehearsal, the other members enjoyed singing them, which gave me confidence that the humour worked. Public responses showed similar success. The videos were also a collaborative effort. In my mind I had concepts, locations and shots planned for each video. On the day of recording each member of the quartet brought their own ideas of performance to the videos and occasionally put forth their own thoughts to add to the humour.

## IV. Musical Commentary

This next section will contain in depth analysis of all the works in my portfolio. During this section, when musical examples are used from other artists' music, unless a score is referenced the material is transcribed by myself. Additionally, all the songs and pieces I reference throughout are listed in the discography.

### The *Vernacular* set

*Vernacular* is a set of vocal compositions based on texts written by friends, with one by myself. Each piece is based on aspects my musical heritage, sometimes depending on my musical relationship with the author of the text. For example, Chris Knight (author of the poems from *ShittyBusPoems*, *MetaAsFuck* and *Jigsaw*) and I are in a barbershop quartet, therefore I set his haikus in the style of barbershop tags.

From the start of this project, the idea was to write vocal music, both as a continuation of my undergraduate work and because I am a singer myself. During my undergraduate degree I set texts by Romantic poet Percy Shelley. The problem is that this is not the kind of language that I use. The *Vernacular* set marked the start of a change of musical and linguistic vernacular, with a view to making music more reflective of my personality.

### *Vernacular 1: Treftadaeth* (Aug. 2013 - Nov. 2013)

*Treftadaeth* is for solo soprano with body percussion, performed by the singer hitting various parts of the body with her hands. The work was performed by Peyee Chen in January 2014.

‘Treftadaeth’ is the Welsh word for ‘heritage’, which has a double meaning. Firstly it connects to my musical heritage. This was the first piece that I wrote in the idiom of contemporary art music that consciously incorporated stylistic qualities of my musical heritage outside of Western art music. The genres focused on are heavy metal and folk music. ‘Heritage’ secondly means my Welsh heritage. It was written at the time where I was personally struggling with my connection to my homeland due to losing my home in South Wales. This heritage appears mainly in the text, which is written in fragmented and transliterated Welsh, using nonsensical sounds not found in English.

### Music

#### *Harmony and Form*

The opening section of the work is in free-time. The body percussion part consists of a roll atop the performer’s thighs to create a drone. Above this, the performer sings melodic lines based on the Aeolian and Phrygian modes on A, followed by the same modes on D and a small passage of G Phrygian, with the section ending on A Aeolian, with chromaticism throughout.

The rest of the piece is in three sections each based on different rhythmic ostinatos. The voice and body percussion introduce the ostinatos together, with the voice singing a riff based on a certain harmonic idea set to the ostinato rhythm, while the hands upon the body retain the rhythmic pattern of the ostinato throughout the section (see fig.1). The voice then moves to different material both melodically and metrically returning periodically to the ostinato. The first ostinato, from bar 6, is based on D Aeolian, whilst the melodic material is based on A Aeolian and A Phrygian, with occasional chromaticism. The second ostinato, from bar 37, is based

on the A wholetone scale. The final section, from bar 71, is chromatic and based around E. This section ends with a melodic line that starts on E Phrygian (bar 102), but breaks down chromatically towards the end of the piece.

*Meter and Rhythm*

The ostinatos throughout are in irregular time signatures. The first two are in 10/8, but with different groupings (see figs.1 and 2). The final ostinato starts in 10/8 (see fig.3), again with a different grouping, but after four repetitions the first quaver is doubled in length, making the ostinato 11/8 for the rest of the piece (see fig.4).

Fig.1: *Treftadaeth* Ostinato (bars 2-8)

2  $\text{♩} = 100$  3

Sop.

R.H.+L.H:  
Move from chest  
down to thighs

Bod.  
Perc.

pp

6

R.H:  
R.Thigh  
(front+side)

L.H:  
L.Thigh  
(front+side)

Move to quickly  
to 'nn' sound

Sop.

p mf

Lla-dy-ba Dy-ba-du Llan Du-ba Lla-dy-ba Dy-ba-du Llan Du-ba Lla-dy-ba Dy-ba-du Llan Du-ba

Bod.  
Perc.

mf

Fig.2: *Treftadaeth* Ostinato 2 (bars 37-38)

37 p

Sop.

R.H:  
R+L Thigh  
(f+s)  
R+L Chest  
R+L Should.

L.H:  
L+R Thigh  
(f+s)  
L+R Chest  
L+R Should.

Sop.

Lla - na Dy - ba Lla - na - dy Ba - dy - ba Lla - na Dy - ba Lla - na - dy Ba - dy - ba

Bod.  
Perc.

mf

Fig.3: *Treftadaeth* Ostinato 3 (bars 71-72)

Fig.4: *Treftadaeth* Ostinato 4 (bars 77-78)

When the final ostinato reappears for the penultimate time, the voice is required to sing the ostinato as usual, however the rhythm played by the body percussion changes. Subjacent to the 11/8 pattern is a percussion rhythm in 7/8 (see fig.5).

Fig.5: *Treftadaeth* Polymeter (bars 104-105)

Throughout, the melodic passages that punctuate the ostinato in the vocal line form polymeters against the percussion, often crossing the part in awkward ways (see fig.6).

Fig.6: *Treftadaeth* Polymeter 2 (bars 10-12)

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for the Soprano (Sop.) in treble clef, 6/8 time. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a fermata over the first note. The lyrics are: "Ble \_\_\_\_\_ mae'r \_\_\_\_\_ dydd - i - au a fu?". The bottom staff is for Body Percussion (Bod. Perc.) in a 10/8 time signature, marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. It features a continuous roll of eighth notes with accents (>) over each note.

R.H:	L.H:
R.Thigh (f+s)	L.Thigh (f+s)
R.Chest	L.Chest

### Musical Heritage

#### *Folk*

The influence of folk manifests itself in the melodic vocal lines. Throughout the piece, the melodies are based on modes, a common folk idiom. I chose the Aeolian mode for its prevalence in traditional British folk.<sup>4</sup> Another melodic folk idiom used in this piece is ornamentation. Quick turns, mordents and appoggiaturas are commonly used by modern folk singers, such as Seth Lakeman, Emily Portman and Ruth Notman.<sup>5</sup>

*Treftadaeth's* opening free-time section is also inspired by folk. When writing it, I had in mind the track 'Farewell my love' from Seth Lakeman's album *Kitty Jay*. The track consists of a D drone played on the fiddle, whilst Lakeman sings over it an ornamented Aeolian melody. In *Treftadaeth*, the body percussion roll acts as the drone.

<sup>4</sup> Vaughan Williams collected British folk tunes from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a majority of melodies found were Aeolian (Kennedy, 1966, p. 28).

<sup>5</sup> As can be heard in 'Caledonia' by Ruth Notman.

This work is also related to folk by elements of improvisation. *Treftadaeth's* body percussion part is improvisatory in nature as the performer chooses what parts of the body to strike throughout, guided by boxes in the score.

The fact that this piece is played all by one person with their body also is evocative of folk, as the piece is simple and can be performed anywhere requiring no technology.

### *Metal - Riffs*

Metal is referenced in the work by the riff-like ostinato patterns. They were intentionally created in unusual time signatures to reference the riffs of progressive metal bands like Symphony X and Dream Theater. Their riffs regularly appear with no supporting harmony, as is the case in *Treftadaeth*.

Dream Theater occasionally use riffs that are atonal and chromatic similar to the last ostinato of *Treftadaeth*. An example would be the opening riff of 'The Dark Eternal Night' from the album *Systematic Chaos*. The riff keeps returning to B which gives us a tonal anchor, but the rest is chromatic (see fig.7) The notes in the first bar suggest B Lydian, as it has the augmented fourth and the perfect fifth, but then we encounter an A natural, which is not found in that mode. Following this in bar 3 (beat 3) the same pattern of intervals is played an augmented second lower.

Fig.7: 'The Dark Eternal Night' opening riff (guitar transposing score)

7-string Electric Guitar

3

Riffs with this kind of transposition are common because the guitarist can already play the pattern. The guitarist's fingers on the left hand (for a right handed guitarist) play the same pattern but move up or down a number of frets. In the case of this Dream Theater riff, the pattern shifts down three frets but maintains the use of the open B string. This is also referenced in the final ostinato of *Treftadaeth* (see fig.8), which shifts up and down semitones maintaining the same intervallic pattern as though a guitarist were just shifting their hand up and down the fretboard.

Fig.8: *Treftadaeth* transposing ostinato (bars 97-102)

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piece *Treftadaeth*. The first system, starting at bar 97, is marked *mf* (mezzo-forte). It consists of two staves: a Soprano (Sop.) staff in 11/8 time and a Bod. Perc. (Bod. Perc.) staff in 7/8 time. The Soprano part has a melodic line with lyrics: "Dow Da-ia Ba-ia-ba Da-ia-da-ia Dow Da-ia Ba-ia-ba Da-ia-da-ia Dow Da-ia Ba-ia-ba Da-ia-da-ia". The Bod. Perc. part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, marked *f* (forte). The second system, starting at bar 100, continues the same musical material.

The melodic passage at the end of the piece (from bar 138) is an additional metal reference, this time to the guitar solo, specifically referencing the song 'Bleed' by Meshuggah. The song ends with a climactic guitar solo that clings to 4/4 time whilst the rhythm guitar plays a riff that opposes that meter. In my work, the soprano's melodic line sticks to 11/8, whilst the ostinato pattern is in 7/8. The final riff in *Treftadaeth* also has metal reference. The ostinato starts on the word 'Dow' and glissandos down an octave. This was done to be an onomatopoeic version of a

sliding distorted guitar and is a secondary reference to how the metal subgenre djent got its name.<sup>6</sup>

### *Metal – Harmonic Language*

The second riff in *Treftadaeth* is based on the wholetone scale. In metal, wholetone riffs and melodies are regularly found. Scar Symmetry use them to create a futuristic atmosphere in the song ‘Holographic Universe’, which begins with a four-note motif derived from the wholetone scale (see fig.9). Wholetone ideas then appear in different riffs throughout the song, for example the riffs at 1'09" (see fig.10) and 4'05" (see fig.11).

Fig.9: ‘Holographic Universe’ wholetone introduction

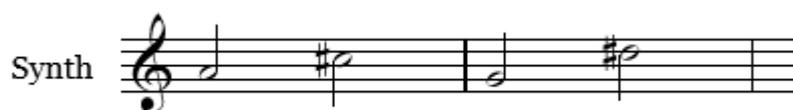


Fig.10: ‘Holographic Universe’ wholetone tremolo picked riff (guitar transposing score)

7-string  
Electric Guitar  
Dropped A tuning  
(A-E-A-D-G-B-E)

$\text{♩} = 80$

<sup>6</sup> The word djent was originally used as an onomatopoeic description of the sound the guitars make in the genre (Mansoor, cited in Got-djent, n.d).

Fig.11: ‘Holographic Universe’ wholetone tremolo picked riff 2 (guitar transposing score)

7-string  
Electric Guitar  
Dropped A tuning  
(A-E-A-D-G-B-E)

$\text{♩} = 120$

Dream Theater also use wholetone riffs, as can be heard in their songs ‘Scene Two: I. Overture 1928’ (from 1’01” onwards, see fig.12) and ‘Scene Seven: I. The Dance of Eternity’, which has short wholetone punctuations throughout. For example in bar 34 (around 1’09”, see fig.13), the Phrygian material is broken up by wholetone runs. At 42 (from 1’24”. see fig.14), these runs feature again in the keyboard line, and then from bars 152-171 (4’42” onwards), there is a riff that is based on a mixture of G Mixolydian and wholetone material (see fig.15).

Fig.12: ‘Overture 1928’ wholetone riff (guitar transposing score)

Electric Guitar

E. Gtr.

Fig.13: ‘The Dance of Eternity’ wholetone run (Dream Theater, 2002, p. 7, bar 34)

34

G5

C#5

Kbd.

Fig.14: 'The Dance of Eternity' wholetone run 2 (Dream Theater, 2002, p. 9, bar 42)

Fig.14: 'The Dance of Eternity' Mixolydian wholetone riff (guitar transposing score)

(Dream Theater, 2002, p. 24, bars 152-154)

Sikth, a band labelled as one of the 'pioneers' of the djent (Thomson, 2011), also use wholetone harmonies in their music, seeing the idea crossover to that subgenre. There is an extended section based on wholetone harmonies from 1'51" onward, in their song 'Scent of the Obscene'.

As well as wholetone harmonies, metal often uses modality. Indeed, my use of the Phrygian mode has stronger ties to heavy metal than it does British folk. Metallica use the Phrygian mode in their song 'Wherever I May Roam' to capture what their guitarist Kirk Hammett calls an 'Eastern' sound (ClubHammett, 2009). This may be a reference to Anatolia, the Asian part of Turkey, where the Grecians got the mode from the Phrygian tribe and incorporated it into their musical theory (Bachman and Dinçol, n.d), or continental Europeans, whose folk music has strong ties with the Phrygian mode (Powers, n.d). However, Hammett's reference to sitars could suggest he wished to achieve a South Asian or Indian sound.

The mode can also be found in Dream Theater's work. The opening sections of the song 'Scene Six: Home' and 'Scene Seven: I. The Dance of Eternity' from their

album *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes from a Memory* both have Phrygian sections at the beginning. In ‘Scene Six: Home’, it is used to create a South Asian sound again as it is accompanied by synthesised sitar. This seems to be part of the reason why this mode is commonly used in metal; to create an exotic sound. I use it, however – particularly at the end of *Treftadaeth* – to capture the spirit of metal.

### Text

I began writing this piece as I moved back home after finishing my undergraduate degree, and for the first time I fully felt the effects of losing my childhood home in Wales. As I had spent the last few years living in England, with very few friends that still lived in Wales, it felt as though my final connection to my land were breaking. The way I faced this musically was by constructing a text based on the language that I had only half learned as a child, which represents my personal circumstances and my regret for not learning the Welsh language. This is also the first piece that I had written my own text for, and therefore the text connected me to my heritage at a time where it had never felt so distant.

Initially, I started by compiling a list of Welsh consonants less common in English. These firstly included: ‘ll’, ‘ch’, ‘ng’ and ‘dd’. I then combined these with vowels to make nonsense words.<sup>7</sup> I added into the texts words and sentences in both Welsh and English that said how I felt. The original idea for this piece was to have parts in English, but as the piece became more developed, the English seemed out of place and, it became clear that the true meaning of the text should be implied.

The melodic passages in the piece are based mostly on sentences and words of real Welsh, though towards the end of the piece this becomes more fragmented and

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<sup>7</sup> Vowels in Welsh consist of the letters, a, e, i, o, u, w, and y and have both long and short forms

punctuated by nonsense. The ostinato riffs however consist purely of nonsensical Welsh sounds. This idea was partly inspired by the *a capella* music of Bobby McFerrin, particularly the song 'Drive', in which he sings a scat style riff punctuated by the main vocal melody in English.

*Vernacular 2 and 4: The Barbershop Haikus*

This section discusses two sets of pieces written for barbershop quartet. The barbershop works are not put together in the set because if it was ever to be performed as a whole, the two works should be separated to allow their thematic differences to be apparent.

*Vernacular 2: ShittyBusPoems* and *Vernacular 4: MetaAsFuck* are two sets of four miniatures for barbershop quartet in a pseudo-barbershop style. The stylistic qualities of the barbershop genre are bastardised by incorporating elements of my musical heritage and style. The works are riddled with parody and humour, based on simple word painting of the comedic texts.

*Elements of barbershop style*

*The Barbershop Tag*

The pieces are inspired by the barbershop ‘tag’, a dramatic section at the end of a barbershop song, based on lyrics from the chorus, final lines or title. Tags are often loud and declamatory,<sup>8</sup> though some are soft and sweet,<sup>9</sup> and are regularly performed independently of the whole piece.

Tags often contain a ‘post’, a pedal (usually the tonic) held by one of the singers throughout, whilst the other parts move holding different clashing chords and moving through different tonalities before returning to the tonic. For example, in Jay Giallombardo’s arrangement of Bernstein’s ‘Tonight’,<sup>10</sup> the tenor posts on the tonic of G major. Below this the other singers form an Eb seventh chord followed by a C minor seventh chord, during which the harmony has already strayed from G major.

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<sup>8</sup> See ‘The Impossible Dream’ tag (Torres, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> See ‘Johanna’ tag (Roberts, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Recordings of this work are not commercially available, but it can be found online (Kesler 2010).

Then the harmony shifts to an F major chord followed by an Ab major chord, in which the G is the ninth and then the major seventh respectively, where it is at its most dissonant, before the harmony finally settles on G major (see fig.16). In my pieces I include posts, but the harmonies often break down quicker around the post and less emphasis is placed on tonality.

Fig.16: 'Tonight' Tag (Bernstein, 1957)

The image shows a musical score for a piano accompaniment. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody in the treble staff starts with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a quarter note B4. The bass staff starts with a quarter note F#3, followed by a half note G3, and then a quarter note A3. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings like 'x' and '8'. The lyrics 'Tag night to - night to - night' are written below the notes.

### *Harmonic Language*

With regard to harmonies, the Barbershop Harmony Society's Contest and Judgment Handbook says:

One of the defining hallmarks of the barbershop style is the barbershop 7<sup>th</sup> chord. (Barbershop Harmony Society, 2013, p.9-7)

The handbook also states that arrangements fit for contest used to need 'a minimum of 33% barbershop 7<sup>th</sup> chords by duration' (Barbershop Harmony Society, 2013, p.9-7). Though the rules are no longer as strict, it shows how important this chord has been to the style. The chord is a regular major triad with the minor seventh. The reasons for the use of this chord are the tritone between the third and the seventh and the minor seventh or major second interval between the tonic and seventh which can create a beating that barbershop singers refer to as 'ringing' which is a 'hallmark of the barbershop style' (Barbershop Harmony Society, 2013, p.4-2). In my pieces

this beating is achieved, but I do not focus on using 'barbershop seventh' chords, instead I use chords with clashes and extensions.

### *Arrangement*

The arrangement of my works is another relation to barbershop; the harmonies are close and the voice leading is natural. They are based upon my own barbershop experience, and for seasoned quartet some individual lines should feel familiar. For example, in *Twat on a bike*, the tenor line in the final three bars moves from the 4<sup>th</sup> degree of the scale, to the 2<sup>nd</sup>, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the final chord; this is a classic tenor line during a tag's final cadence as can be seen in the real barbershop tag *In Dixie Land*.<sup>11</sup> (See. fig.17 and 18)

Fig.17: *In Dixie Land* end cadence

The musical score for the end cadence of 'In Dixie Land' is presented in two systems. The top system shows the vocal line with lyrics 'Dix - ie land.' and a tenor line with a melodic line starting on the 4th degree of the scale. The bottom system shows the piano accompaniment with lyrics 'land. Dix - ie land.' and a bass line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is marked with a '4' at the beginning of the top system.

Fig.18: *Twat on a bike* end cadence (bars 10-12)

The musical score for the end cadence of 'Twat on a bike' is presented in two systems. The top system shows the vocal line with lyrics 'your bold eyes.' and a tenor line with a melodic line starting on the 4th degree of the scale. The bottom system shows the piano accompaniment with lyrics 'eyes? your bold eyes.' and a bass line. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is marked with 'mf' (mezzo-forte) at the beginning of the top system.

<sup>11</sup> The composer of this tag is unknown (murray537, 2007) and performances of the tag are not commercially available, but good renditions can be found online (Walters, 2009).

*Vernacular 2* and *4* also parody barbershop by ending in Ab major, whatever keys they stray to. This is because when rehearsing with my barbershop quartet we found many pieces in that key. The reason for the key's prevalence is that register lends itself well to a male quartet. The notes Ab<sup>2</sup> and its dominant Eb<sup>2</sup> are low in register for a bass, but are still achievable for competent basses, and Ab<sup>4</sup> and the third above (C<sup>5</sup>) are feasible for barbershop tenors allowing a wide range for writing.

In these works, the aim was not to completely copy the barbershop style. Throughout I maintain my own harmonic language, which is a significant departure from barbershop in which consonance is of utmost importance (Barbershop Harmony Society, 2013, p.5-4). My work's emphasis is on word painting of the humorous texts rather than inserting as many seventh chords as possible. I have merely tried to capture the spirit of barbershop by creating fun miniatures, rather than attempting pastiche.

Vernacular 2: ShittyBusPoems (Oct. 2013 – March 2014)Text

The texts from this set are haikus, apart from *O! Little Child*, which is a short lullaby and *Twat on a bike*, which was unwittingly one syllable too long. The pieces are humorous and aim to represent language spoken in modern day Britain. They were written by Chris Knight, who is a singer and videogamer who spends too much time on the internet. These things I have in common with him and both of our collaborative personalities are displayed in this set of musical haikus.

The set is entitled *ShittyBusPoems* because they were written by Chris on various bus journeys. They reference his encounters with other road users (*Twat on a bike* and *Dear Mr Prius*) and his experiences with his fellow travellers (*O! Little Child* and *Personal Space*).

1. *Twat on a bike (Oct. 2013)*

Twat on a bike why  
does the sun blister your bald head  
and blind your bold eyes?

Harmony

*Twat on a bike* is mostly modal. The key signature suggests E major, but the material is based on G# Phrygian and C# Aeolian. The piece begins with a G# major chord that changes to minor, followed by four bars based on G# Phrygian, ending on a D# major chord that suggests G# harmonic minor. From bar 7 the melody changes

to C# Aeolian as the lead moves stepwise from C#<sup>4</sup> to C#<sup>3</sup> with a supporting harmony that remains around G#. The lead then posts on C#, which functionally becomes a Db, as the piece ends with a perfect cadence in Ab major.

### *Humour*

Humour can be found from the off in the lead's proclamation of the word 'Twat', which is then reinforced by the other singers. Word painting can be found in the bright D# major chord on 'sun' and the major second clash between the lead and tenor on the second syllable of 'blister'.

Some humour is notational, intended for the performers, as the piece could have been written entirely in flats, but they are only used in the final three bars, highlighting the Ab major joke to performers.

## *2. Personal Space (Oct. 2013)*

Elderly old man,  
Cares not for personal space.  
Uncomfortable.

### *Harmony*

Though the key signature is Ab major, the piece is atonal. It starts with a wide Ab major chord, which then changes to an equally wide F minor chord. The bass jumps an octave bringing the texture closer on a D diminished triad, which is followed by a G major 7<sup>th</sup> chord (with the F# spelt as a Gb to highlight the baritone's whole-tone line). The harmony in this bar is confused and chromatic, painting the

author's disgust at the old man. From bar 3 harmonies build out from a unison Ab, using the notes of Ab Mixolydian, landing in bar 5 on an Ab suspended 4<sup>th</sup> (add 3<sup>rd</sup>) chord, again painting issues with space. The piece ends with a cluster of the notes Ab, B, C and D, which resolves to Ab major.

### *Humour*

*Personal Space* is the shortest piece of the set, and humour lies in the fact that the piece is over so quickly. The word painting consists of moving from a wide texture to a narrow one, ending with a cluster on the word 'uncomfortable' which cadences humorously onto an Ab major chord.

### 3. *Dear Mr Prius (March 2014)*

Dear Mr Prius,  
Your car does not exclude you  
From being a prick.

*Dear Mr Prius* focuses on the 'doo-wop' style arrangement found in barbershop music. Doo-wop uses voices impersonating instruments with onomatopoeic, nonsensical sounds often as backing to a main vocal melody (Sanjek, n.d.), which is believed to stem from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century barbershop music (Rockwell, n.d.). As this haiku is about a bad driver, the backing consists of 'beeps', instead of 'ahs' and 'oos' found in doo-wop.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>There are many barbershop arrangements that use a doo-wop style. Good examples would include: 'Hello Marylou' (snobsdirector, 2010), 'Can you feel the love tonight' (TheFinalChorusUEA, 2012) and 'Lullabye (Goodnight, My Angel)' (Roberts, 2012)

### Harmony

The harmony in *Dear Mr Prius* is simplistic and, for the most part, static, based on an Ab major chord created by the backing voices (tenor, baritone and bass) with each 7/8 bar finishing with the tenor and baritone imitating a car horn with a semitone clash on a C and Db. The harmonic interest of the piece lies mainly in the melodic line, which adds some modal flavour – Ab Aeolian – which causes false relations when the Cb and Gb occur around C and G naturals of Ab major (see fig.19).

Fig.19: *Dear Mr Prius* false relations (bars 6-8)

The musical score for Figure 19 shows three staves in 7/8 time, key of Ab major. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics 'car. does not ex - c'. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment, marked 'mp' and 'cont.sim.'. The piano accompaniment consists of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the left hand. The key signature has three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab). The time signature is 7/8. The score shows a semitone clash between C and Db in the vocal line.

The backing departs from the Ab major chord for two beats at bar 9, where they land on a Db major. For the next four bars after this chord, the backing alternates between Cb major and Ab major, giving a feel that it changes between Ab Aeolian and Ionian modes.

### Meter

The piece switches between 7/8 and 4/4. 7/8 is mostly used in the sections where just the backing voices are singing. The meter highlights the C/Db semitone clash between the baritone and tenor on the last two quavers of the bar and also simulates the kind of movement one might get on a car with a flat tire.

*Humour*

The humour is created in the piece by the car horn beeps throughout. Also the piece ends with the bass (as low as possible) reiterating the final word of the haiku – ‘prick’ – followed by a ‘beep beep’ by the lead and tenor on a high G and Ab respectively.

4. *O! Little Child (Oct. 2013)*

O! Little child why must you scream?  
 O! Little child, can you not dream?  
 Instead little child is running amok.  
 O! Little child, shut the fuck up.

*O! Little Child* is the longest piece of the set, with two short verses, a bridge and a tag on the words ‘shut the fuck up.’ It starts as a gentle lullaby, but as the piece progresses and the words get angrier and the diatonicism breaks down into chaos. The main vocal melody in this piece is the tenor line to give it a gentle quality. Humour in this work is found in the unexpected change from a lullaby to anger at the child and the use of swearing in that context.

*Harmony*

The piece starts off with a unison Ab, which then moves outwards stepwise into a closely arranged F minor dominant 9<sup>th</sup> chord. The texture spreads out with a series of suspensions, remaining completely diatonic. The parts then draw back together on the word ‘scream’ in a hushed G minor add 4<sup>th</sup> chord. This chord on the 7<sup>th</sup> degree forms a cadence to a solo Ab by the baritone. He is joined by the other

singers and the opening material repeats but augmented temporally, this time moving outwards to land on a diatonic cluster from Bb<sup>3</sup> to Eb<sup>4</sup>. This time, a Gb is added to the melodic line on the words 'little child', adding a Mixolydian colouration, representing the speakers yearning that child sleep. On the line 'can you not dream?' the vocal melody is based upon a wholetone scale, painting the word 'dream' and the instability of the narrator. After a loud, high and unresolved Ab suspended 4<sup>th</sup> chord, the harmony breaks down to chromatic atonality on the words 'Instead, little child is running amok', painting anger at the screaming child.

The piece works towards diatonicism from bar 22 at the tag, which is split into two parts. The first part has a Bb post by the lead and the second has a tenor post on Ab, leading back to the home key of the piece. The work ends on a startlingly wide Ab major chord that has no fifth, but instead a fourth, which leaves the piece feeling unfinished.

### *'Building out' harmonies*

This piece marks the first time I make a main feature of four voices starting on the same note and moving outwards (which will be discussed in full later, in the section *Vernacular 6: The Olive Grove*). I use it in two different ways in this piece: firstly it starts off the lullaby with the gentle major second dissonances moving out to a fuller chord, and secondly, from the word 'instead', all voices start on an Eb at 3 octaves that then move out by semitones and tones, creating an atonal chord (see fig.20).

Fig.20: *O! Little Child* building out technique (bars 17-19)

4

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a soprano clef (C4) and a key signature of two flats (B-flat major/D minor). It contains a vocal line with lyrics: "Oh! In - stead litt-le child". The lower staff is in bass clef with a bass clef (C2) and the same key signature. It contains a piano accompaniment. Dynamic markings include **f** (forte) and **p** (piano) with hairpins indicating crescendos and decrescendos. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 across the three bars shown.

Oh! In - stead litt-le child

**p** **f**

*Vernacular 4: MetaAsFuck (Oct. 2013 – March 2014)*

*MetaAsFuck* is similar to *ShittyBusPoems* as it is a set of humorous haikus (with no mistakes this time), written by Chris Knight, set for barbershop quartet. For this set the theme is different. The poems look at idea of ‘Meta’ and are all self-referential in some way. They consist of poems about writing poems, musical composition, internet culture and linguistic vernacular. The title of the set is a modern vernacular way of saying that something is particularly Meta.

1. *Succinct (Oct. 2013)*

I suck at succinct.  
This is not preferable  
When writing short po...

*Harmony*

This is another haiku where the main joke is in the text, so it was my job to simply highlight it. The piece starts off atonal, painting the poet’s distaste at his own skills. The harmony then moves towards Ab major. On the words ‘when writing’ the tag begins, leading to a II-V-I in Ab major, but unfortunately we land on the dominant on the final syllable; ‘po...’

*Humour*

The joke here of course is the most obvious one to make, but the text is clever enough to make up for my lack thereof and it is a musical joke that even those untrained in music could understand.

2. *No Bullshit (Feb. 2014)*

Compose to explore  
Our colloquial language.  
No bullshit found here.

This haiku is a parody of something I encountered at university. People regularly asked me if I did ‘normal’ composition (which usually meant tonal music) or ‘bullshit’ composition (which refers to experimental or atonal music). In setting this haiku, I decided to use both idioms. There are moments of tonality and moments of utter ‘bullshit’.

This is the hardest of all the haikus to perform. The introduction is easy to sing and somewhat familiar in arrangement, but the tag is purposefully ‘bullshit’ as it is loud, high and includes tricky voice leading and crossing parts.

*Harmony*

The piece starts off tonal, based around A minor, but with some added chromaticism to word paint ‘explore’ and ‘our colloquial language’. In the last two beats of bar 5, we reach the dominant, E major, with a renaissance style cadential ornament to the major third in the baritone line, representing non-bullshit music. This is followed by an improvised section, serving as a parody of experimental music.

The tag then starts with an octave glissando up to an A<sup>4</sup>, which the tenor has to pitch unaided and post for the first half of the tag. Then, on the word ‘no’, the other singers start off on an A major chord that moves down to G major, with a suspended fourth. This is simple, but it is followed by the words ‘no bullshit here’

where the voice leading goes awry and the singers have some awkward leaps, demonstrating 'bullshit'.

We then have the words "cept this", where the vocal lines all crossover via glissandi and the lead takes over the post on a G. This is followed by more chromaticism, before the singers land on a high C major chord. The lead then shifts his post up a semitone to Ab, and the piece ends with a high II-V-I in Ab major.

### *Humour*

As well as the aforementioned difficulty, the piece creates humour with a section that parodies the way some composers introduce experimental ideas into choral works. In this case I parody guided improvisation. Pieces that use this include *Crepuscular Hour*, by composer Maja Ratkje, where one of the choirs involved is given a set of phrases and notes that are to be sung in free time towards the end of the piece, and *o lux beata trinitas* by Kerry Andrews, which has a section where each vocal part has a melodic line with staggered entries within the part, singing at any tempo as often one likes. In my piece, I use a similar idea. The singers are instructed to

Sing for the first time in rhythmic unison, but sing any pitch (the pitch can be changed throughout the phrase). Then sing, speak, or whisper 'No bullshit found here' at any pitch or tempo, but get more insistent each repeat. The general dynamic should increase until fortissimo is reached. Maintain a loud din until someone makes a signal to stop. The quartet should stop together and instantly (from *Vernacular 4*: Performance notes).

### 3. *Meta (March 2014)*

A haiku using  
Internet vernacular?  
LOL, that's retarded.

This haiku makes reference to internet culture. It starts with the tenor, baritone and bass simultaneous performing independent, djent-inspired rhythmic lines, creating a polyrhythmic texture. The first bar uses Ab major harmonies and the second uses chromaticism. They sing their rhythms to the word 'nyan', which is based on 'nya' the Japanese equivalent of 'meow', inspired by the popular internet meme 'Nyan Cat' (KnowYourMeme, 2014 [b]).

They begin singing as quietly as possible and repeat the two bars until they reach mezzo forte. The lead then speaks the words of the haiku whilst imitating the robotic American voice of 'Microsoft Sam', the text-to-speech voice found on Windows 2001 and XP, or Stephen Hawking. On the words 'internet vernacular', the singers apart from the lead sing 'U mad bro?!' and after the lead's 'LOL,' they sing 'I took an arrow to the knee, LOL!', which are both derived from popular internet memes, to highlight some of the internet vernacular mentioned in the haiku (KnowYourMeme, 2014 [a] and [c]).

#### *Musical Heritage*

Djent was chosen because it is a musical style that was formed on the internet. The lines are not based on any specific djent riffs but contain djent rhythmic traits including syncopation and polyrhythmic material.

4. *A poem by here... (Jan. 2014)*

A poem by here,  
Wrote this year for you're ear.  
Poor English. Great Welsh.

*Text*

This work contains similar themes of language and identity that appear in *Treftadaeth*. The haiku mocks how 'here', 'year' and 'ear' all sound same in a South Welsh accent (pronounced similar to how an Englishman speaking with Received Pronunciation would say 'year'). It also pokes fun at what Chris calls 'superfluous Welsh words'. In this case, the tendency to say 'by here' when 'here' would do. It is also a common Welsh tendency to say 'wrote' instead of 'written' and to say 'you're' (with two syllables, like you-ah), when one really means 'your'.

*Music*

As the piece parodies Welsh English, I decided to include both countries' national anthems. The melody of this piece (sung by the lead) includes sections of the Welsh national anthem, *Hen wlad fy nhadau* written in its original key of Eb major. In the tenor line, transposed to Eb major, is a part of the melody *God Save the Queen*, and the baritone line, again in Eb major, features the start of *Jerusalem*<sup>13</sup> (see figs. 21-23<sup>14</sup>). Meanwhile, under this the bass fills out the harmony, giving the piece some sense of harmonic movement.

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<sup>13</sup> England does not technically have its own national anthem (Anthem4England, n.d.), but these two tunes are some used to represent England at sporting events.

<sup>14</sup> Figures 21-23 show the sections of these anthems that I use in their original forms. The songs are all in the public domain.

Fig.21: *Hen wlad fy nhadau*<sup>15</sup> sections used in *A Poem by Here*

Bars 1-5

Voice

Mae hen wlad fy nha-dau yn ann-wyl i mi, Gwlad

Voice

beirdd a chan - bydd - ed i'r hen-iaith bar - hau.

Final three bars

Fig.22: *God Save the Queen*<sup>16</sup> section used in *A Poem by Here*

Voice

God save our gra - cious Queen, Long live our

Voice

no - ble Queen, God save our Queen.

Fig.23: *Jerusalem*<sup>17</sup> section used in *A Poem by Here*

Voice

And did those feet in an - cient time walk u - pon Eng - land's moun - tains

### Presentation of the barbershop works

The barbershop quartet pieces were written for my own quartet 4D, who recorded the works. The barbershop pieces are also presented with music videos to add to the humour of the pieces. We are amateur music making friends having fun singing fun music, which was the most important thing to portray with the recordings. The audio is high quality but the renditions are not note-for-note perfect; that was not the point.<sup>18</sup> The idea was to create funny recordings to convey the

<sup>15</sup> *Hen wlad fy nhadau* was written in 1856. The music was by James James and the lyrics were by Evan James (Welsh Government, n.d.).

<sup>16</sup> The composer and date for this tune are unknown

<sup>17</sup> *Jerusalem* was written by Hubert Parry in 1916 (Kennedy, 2006)

<sup>18</sup> Also they are difficult to sing!

humour of the works. There are infrequent tuning issues and wrong notes but these aspects add to the character of the recordings.

The videos are also purposefully edited in a quirky manner. There are unusual editing cuts, continuity errors and lip synching issues; these are all done purposefully. The videos were made for the internet and are stylised accordingly, with little or no budget, jump cuts and text annotations as found in video blogs.

The 4D quartet is;

Tenor: Josh Dibble

Lead: Chris Knight

Baritone: Duncan Peel

Bass: Dan Walters

The audio was recorded at the University of Huddersfield on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2014, by 4D. Selina Cross was the sound engineer, mixer and audio editor. The videos were recorded in and around the University of Huddersfield on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2014. They star the 4D quartet, Neil Dibble as 'the elderly old man', Dave Steedman as 'the twat on a bike', and Ollie Reavell in various shots. The camera work was done by Ollie Reavell who also assisted in direction. The videos were conceptualised, directed and edited by myself.

*Vernacular 3: Cambria (Dec. 2013 – May 2014)*

*Cambria* is a work for vocal quartet, percussion quartet and pianist. It is a setting of a section of a Masters thesis entitled *The Ediacaran-Cambrian Transition of the Corumbá Group, Brazil*, by Luke Parry. Luke is an Oxford University graduate and a metal guitarist. His musical interests lie primarily in different varieties of progressive metal. This is something we have in common, and therefore this piece contains influences of djent. The section of Luke's thesis set in *Cambria* is about the speed of animal evolution in Corumbá, Brazil leading into the Cambrian Period. Evolution is an idea that is explored throughout the piece in the way the musical material slowly evolves from a process.

*Music*

*Process*

To tie this piece to djent and scientific nature of the thesis, *Cambria* is based on a process involving the first 23 prime numbers chosen for the prevalence of odd numbers. From these numbers I created a process for generating rhythmic material that is detailed below.

The process started with the first 23 prime numbers (2-83). I then took the following steps:

- I added groups of three together  
e.g. 2+3+5, 3+5+7, 5+7+11, etc.
- When 83 was the product of a trio (this occurred after the 6<sup>th</sup> trio), I stopped. I eliminated the prime numbers that were not a product of this process
- We are left with; Primes: 2,3,5,11,13,17,19,23,29,31,41,59,71,83, and non-primes: 6 (from the number of trios), 10,15,49

- Non-primes became structural and were used to create sections built of time signatures as follows; [10/8, 15/8, 10/8, 15/8, 10/8, 15/8, 4/8] and [10/8, 15/8, 10/8, 15/8, 10/8, 15/8, 9/8].<sup>19</sup> 6 was used to decide the number of bars before a 4/8 or 9/8 bar.
- 2-7 became rhythmic groupings

The sections are based around patterns as follows;

Section A = two 16<sup>th</sup> notes played, separated by three 16<sup>th</sup> note rests (see fig.24), against the reverse; three 16<sup>th</sup> rests, followed by two 16<sup>th</sup> notes played (see fig.25).

Fig.24: Cambria Rhythmic pattern 1



Fig.25: Cambria Rhythmic pattern 2



Section C = three 16<sup>th</sup> notes played, separated by five 16<sup>th</sup> note rests (see fig.26), against the reverse (see fig.27).

Fig.26: Cambria Rhythmic pattern 3



<sup>19</sup> These time changes are reflected in the pulse which is kept throughout by the piano and celeste. The choral writing also keeps with these meters throughout most of the piece. The percussion on the other hand mostly ignores meter to play rhythmic patterns. This also explains why the 10/8 bars are not 5/4.

Fig.27: *Cambria* Rhythmic pattern 4



Section E = five 16<sup>th</sup> notes played, separated by seven 16<sup>th</sup> note rests (see fig.28), against the reverse (see fig.29).

Fig.28: *Cambria* Rhythmic pattern 5



Fig.29: *Cambria* Rhythmic pattern 6



From Section F, when the voices take over this material, all of these lines then come together.

- 13-83 became rhythmic changes. These occur first in Section D (Percussion 2. See fig.30) and later from Section G (to multiple lines simultaneously)

These changes add a certain number of semiquavers to a pattern, for example:

13 = go along the sequence 3 semiquavers, add 1 semiquaver to rhythm

29 = go along the sequence 9 semiquavers, add 2 semiquavers to rhythm<sup>20</sup>

And so on.

Fig.30: *Cambria* - Changes applied to a 3 separated by 5 line (bars 40-41)

<sup>20</sup>When this change lands on a rest, the rest becomes a struck note the length of that change

- From Section H when multiple changed lines appear, one change is removed from two lines meaning that the accents get offset

This is the basic material of the piece, though extra bars are added throughout for dramatic purpose. The choral part is not based on this process and was written based on word painting like a standard choral piece, with the percussion featuring as accompaniment in places.

### *Harmony*

The harmonies in this piece are fairly ambiguous consisting of open chords with few defining thirds, chords with extensions, and whole tone and chromatic harmonies. The piece gets more and more dissonant throughout as all harmonic ideas evolve.

### *Musical Heritage*

In this work the focus is on the genre djent, an offshoot of progressive metal. Unlike progressive metal, djent is predominately in 4/4. Instead djent is characterised by heavy syncopation. The pulse is kept by the drummer's hi-hat or cymbals whilst against it a riff that uses syncopation or a different pulse is played by the guitarist(s) and bassist. An example of a djent riff is the opening of 'Icarus Lives!' by Periphery (see fig.31).

Fig.31: 'Icarus Lives!' Opening riff (guitar transposing score)

7-string  
Electric Guitar  
Dropped Ab tuning  
(Ab-Eb-Ab-Db-Gb-Bb Eb)

$\text{♩} = 110$

This idea is used in *Cambria*. The pulse is kept by the pianist throughout, functioning as the drummer while the percussion material then essentially ignores this pulse. Then from Section D the changes are implemented in 2<sup>nd</sup> Percussionist's part, using digits 13-81 of the sequence. These changed rhythms contradict the pulse and create complex syncopated rhythms similar to those found in djent.

The idea to work with a process based on a numbers was inspired by the song 'Pi', by djent band After the Burial. A detailed description of the process used in this song can be found in the video description of the song on their record label's YouTube channel, written by their guitarist, Trent Hafdahl (cited in SumerianRecords, 2012). The basic idea is that the integers of pi translate to a rhythmic pattern (see fig.32). In my process, I used this idea of having a number of semiquavers separated by a number of semiquaver rests which formed the percussion material in the piece.

Fig.32: Pi (The Mercury God of Infinity) opening riff (guitar transposing score)



### Text

The section of text I set in this piece is as follows:

Neoproterozoic is a key period for understanding the origin of complex animals. The near-synchronous rapid appearance of the majority of animal phyla and widespread biomineralization in the Cambrian raises key questions about the tempo of animal evolution. Inferring the presence of predators in absence of their fossils using potential prey organisms is not new ... The Neoproterozoic is a key period for understanding the origin of complex animals ... The near-synchronous rapid appearance of the majority of animal phyla during the Cambrian raises key questions about the tempo of animal evolution. (Parry, 2013)

Throughout most of the work I have taken the long, uncommon words from the text and stretched them out melismatically to create a pseudo-sacred music sound. Different vocal parts occasionally have different syllables simultaneously to create intelligibility reminiscent of counterpoint. This is a parody of sacred polyphony; the idea being that the text for *Cambria* could be profound and religious, but it actually means nothing significant. This was also done to create a traditional choral sound against the djent-like accompaniment, mixing two opposing parts of my musical heritage.

During Section D the full extract of text appears in order shouted monorhythmically with a tom-tom part obscuring the words in an attempt to mimic screamed djent vocals. From Section J the text is set for the full choir homophonically.

*Vernacular 5: Jigsaw (Jan. 2014)*

*Jigsaw* is a piece that exists in two forms; one for SATB choir and another for double choir. The work is a setting of another text by Chris Knight. The text is about his experience of teaching and consists of a dialogue between a student and a teacher. The poem incorporates haikus and elements of prose.

This piece is important as it was my first choral piece, and in it I began developing techniques that have been used in every piece since, mainly the changing meter technique and a form of the 'building out' technique (which will both be discussed in the section *Vernacular 6: The Olive Grove*).

*Music*

*Harmony*

The work uses a different tonal centre for each character. The teacher uses B as its tonic with elements of B major, minor and Phrygian. The student's material is based around G# Aeolian and remains largely diatonic throughout.

The piece starts with the teacher, who declares 'I am a jigsaw'. The first three bars of the piece contain B major harmonies with a modal A natural, before moving up to a Phrygian C natural in the third bar, which resolves to B. This is followed by the student in G# Aeolian. The teacher then reiterates the opening material with some variety from bar 9. Bars 12 and 13 then include some G# Aeolian narration before moving back to the teacher. The teacher's material from 14 to 17 consists mostly of B major with a few accidentals that hint towards minor. This is then followed by harmonic instability with suggestions of B Phrygian and C whole tone (bars 20-22), moving to F minor (bars 23 and 24), before returning to B major at bar 25.

After this, the choir continues swapping between G# Aeolian and modes based on B. After a tonal cadence to B major (add 2<sup>nd</sup>) on bar 27, bar 28 continues with a monotone haiku by the student. This is answered by a haiku in B Aeolian by the teacher from the end of bar 36. They land on the dominant with an added fourth in bar 41, before moving back to the opening material a bar later.

This format continues until bar 67 onwards where both characters find middle ground around F# (something which is clearer in the double choir version), singing with various modes whilst building a dominant chord, before returning to the teacher's Aeolian material from bar 36, at bar 75. The piece then ends with the opening material with the teacher's final statement; 'I am a jigsaw'.

### Double Choir Version

For this version the choir is split in two; Choir 1 is the teacher and Choir 2 is the student. This was to help distinguish between the two characters and to enable the meaning of the poem to come across more clearly. Not many changes were made to the musical material between the versions, however there were some areas where the texture was thickened to eight parts (mainly in the section from bar 67-74).

*Vernacular 6: The Olive Grove (Feb. 2014)*

*The Olive Grove* is a work for SATB choir with *divisi*. The text was taken from songs by local singer/songwriter, Aescer. His music a hybrid of prog-rock, acoustic, electronic and orchestral music set in a pop context. This disparity of musical influences is something I feel I share with him.

This piece was written for a local choir who wanted new music but were more used to performing tonal pieces, hence I included more tonality in the work along with my usual harmonic style.

*Text*

Aescer's lyrics have a pop music feel, thus a problem I encountered when finding a suitable text was that the lyrics include many first-person pronouns, which do not translate well to group singing, so I removed these as much as possible.

I chose to set the lyrics of 'The Olive Grove' because of the line, 'See how everything is different now, And yet you're still here.' However, the song is from a concept album and the lyrics from this song alone had no story. Therefore I combined them with lyrics from the song 'Withdrawal Symptoms' and adapted them to create a narrative.<sup>21</sup> The story is about a couple stood in an olive grove that burns down around them and though everything is being destroyed, they still have each other's love.

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<sup>21</sup> 'The Olive Grove' and 'Withdrawal Symptoms' are from the album *The Man Within: Echoes of Silence* (<http://aescer.bandcamp.com/album/the-man-within-echoes-of-silence>). Used with the artist's permission.

## Music

### *Building out harmonies*

This piece was the first where a majority of the material is based on building out harmonies from a unison note. This technique was first used in *O! Little Child* and continued to serve as a tonal anchor in *Jigsaw*. The idea is that several voice parts begin in unison and move outwards stepwise or with easy leaps, often with one part as a pedal (as can be seen in the first few bars of *The Olive Grove*). With the technique, interesting harmonies can be created within a diatonic framework, and atonal sections can be easier to sing due to simple voice leading.

With this choir I had the opportunity to have two soprano and alto parts, so I used it as a feature to develop the technique. If necessary, it allowed me to have four parts that could sing in close harmony, with the tenors and basses added for impact and harmonic support.

### *Harmony*

This work is mostly modal and tonal, with the exception of an octatonic section and brief whole-tone moments. The material from bars 1-16 can be looked at in two ways; as E mixolydian or as dominant preparation for A major. There is a deviation to whole-tone harmonies in bars 8-10, serving as word painting for 'blaze of colours'. A major should come at bar 17, but the chord is unexpectedly A minor, as the piece moves to octatonicism in the soprano melodic line, with the overall harmony based on major and minor chords with extensions. The lack of resolution to A major is a subtle theme that continues through the piece.

From the last beat of bar 19 there is a brief change, and the harmonies are based on B major and minor simultaneously with an octatonic melody. At bar 22, the octatonic material goes back to having no tonal centre and enters with a motif that features later in the tonal section from bar 53 (see fig.33).

Fig.33: *The Olive Grove* Octatonic Motif (bars 22-23)



At bar 27, there is a small passage that links back to the opening E Mixolydian material at bar 30. From bar 36 there is sudden change to F Mixolydian, painting the words ‘things are different now’. This idea becomes the main feature of the piece from bar 53, as the tonality regularly changes whilst the musical material stays the same, all serving as word painting. The lyrics are:

The sky has changed the tree burned down,  
and yet you are still here.

See the ash that’s spreading through the grove,  
and yet you are still here.

See the oceans roar and mountains fall,  
and yet you are still here.

See how everything is different now,  
and yet you are still here.

The tonality changes for each line of the text, word painting the situation changing, however the musical material remains similar, reflecting the lyric; ‘and yet you are still here’. There is a perfect cadence resulting in Bb major at bar 53, onto the lyrics ‘The sky has changed’. The tonality continues until the end of that lyrical line at bar

61, where there is a cadence, onto the next line of lyrics, to G major. The third line moves to E major, as we finally approach A major. For the fourth line the material changes, reminiscent of the opening material. The key change happens at bar 77, and though we get a taste A major, the key is actually A Mixolydian, and the change is not via a perfect cadence like the rest of them. The piece then ends on an A major chord with an added second, leaving it feeling slightly unresolved.

### Musical Heritage

This work is inspired greatly by Judith Weir's *Love bade me welcome*. Firstly, the work starts with an SSA arrangement in close, diatonic harmony and has few full choir sections. These aspects of arrangement I use in *The Olive Grove*. Secondly, after Weir's extended SSA introduction there is a perfect cadence in F major at bar 39 (see fig.34). Before this the music is diatonic rather than tonal and immediately after (at bar 40) the harmonies change to F harmonic minor before breaking down chromatically, only to return to F Ionian from the end of bar 46. The idea of using a perfect cadence followed by a sudden change of harmony may be a feature of Weir's work as she said in an interview:

... there can be a perfect cadence there, but it's got to be disengaged from the music around it. (Weir, cited in Hughes, p. 22, 2005)

In *The Olive Grove* there are often quick changes of harmony around the perfect cadences and the tonality is fleeting.

Fig.34: *Love Bade Me Welcome* sudden harmonic changes, bars 35-46 (Weir, 1997)

The image shows a musical score for three vocal parts: Soprano, Alto, and Tenor Bass. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers bars 35-46, and the second system covers bars 47-52. The music features complex harmonic changes and meter shifts. The lyrics are: 'wor - thy to be here:— 'you shall be he.'— 'I, the un - kind un - grate - ful? Ah,— my dear,— I can - not look on thee.'— 'Ah,— my dear,— I can - not look on thee.'— 'I can - not look on thee.'—

**System 1 (Bars 35-46):**

- Soprano:** Starts in 2/4, changes to 3/8. Dynamics: *mp*, *mf*.
- Alto:** Starts in 2/4, changes to 3/8. Dynamic: *mp*.
- Tenor Bass:** Starts in 2/4, changes to 3/8. Dynamic: *mp*.

**System 2 (Bars 47-52):**

- Soprano:** Starts in 2/4, changes to 2/4, then 3/8. Dynamics: *f*, *f*.
- Alto:** Starts in 2/4, changes to 2/4, then 3/8. Dynamics: *mf*, *f*.
- Tenor Bass:** Starts in 2/4, changes to 2/4, then 3/8. Dynamics: *mf*, *f*.

Another choral work that inspired *The Olive Grove* is Howard Skempton’s *The Voice of the Spirits*. The changing meter idea that I began developing in *Jigsaw* came after listening to this work and researching Skempton’s compositional technique. His text setting is mainly syllabic throughout his works, but the meters constantly change, making the pulse hard to feel.

Skempton said:

In 1980 I’d set a poem of R.S. Thomas, and I’d discovered a way of setting a text – by allowing the rhythm of the text to dictate the rhythm of the music, so the setting was syllabic, on the whole. (Skempton, cited in Fallas, 2012, p. 19)

Skempton goes on to explain that with his technique he finds a suitable text and then sets it syllable by syllable before any notes are written, thus creating a setting that is ‘straightforward, but very flexible’ (Skempton, cited in Fallas, 2012, p. 21) with a regularly changing meter. He then often goes on to compose a soprano melody using the rhythms created and builds harmonies from there. In *The Olive Grove* I use this way of setting text to vary the meter throughout.

The changes of meter in the faster sections from bar 17 are also inspired by metal, mainly the work of Dream Theater. The song ‘Constant Motion’ has a riff that starts in 5/8, moves to 3/4, goes back to 5/8 and has a final bar of 15/16. Though it is written out in these time signatures, this is not strictly correct. The first bar of 5/8 really sounds like a bar of 2/8 followed by a bar of 6/16. The next 3/4 bar has similar material but with two extra semiquavers making it a bar of 2/8, followed by a bar of 3/16 and a bar of 5/16 (see fig.35). This alternation of duple and triple meters I combine with Skempton’s approach to text setting to create a metric language of my own inspired by two different aspects of my musical heritage.

Fig.35: ‘Constant Motion’ Opening riff (guitar transposing score)

♩ = 95

Electric Guitar

E. Gtr.

## Other Works

These works are not in the *Vernacular* set because they are not settings of friends' texts. In the introduction of this thesis, I state that in the past use of older text in composition hindered my creation of a personal style, but when it came to writing these pieces I was already a substantial way through the project and had a clear idea of a style forming, therefore I do not feel that the case is the same with the following pieces.

### *Lamentations* (Feb. 2014 – March 2014)

Though this piece is not in the *Vernacular* set it continues with many of the themes and ideas that have been explored throughout the works. It was written for a competition to have the work performed by The Tallis Scholars, which had a specific brief. The piece was to:

- Be a setting from the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah (in Latin and/or English and including a setting of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet that precede each section of the Lamentations)
- Be SSATB with two singers per part (providing the opportunity to split to ten parts)
- Be around four minutes long
- Demonstrate an awareness of The Tallis Scholars' style

The work consists of two main sections; *I. Aleph* and *II. Beth*. *Aleph* is set as SSATB with *divisi* occurring throughout, mainly for the tenors and basses. *Beth* splits the group of ten singers into two quintets arranged SSSSA (hereby named Choir 1) and ATTB (hereby named Choir 2). This was done to allow for thicker textures and to contrast the different languages. At the end of *Beth*, the choir's arrangement returns to that of *Aleph* to finish the work.

Music*Latin and English text setting*

Latin and English are set differently in this piece. Latin lines of text are set as mixed-meter ostinatos in the *Skemptonesque*/metal way used in *The Olive Grove*, whilst the English on the other hand is set above in the texture, to sound detached and ethereal (see fig.36). This was to create a function like subtitles for the ostinato, providing an understanding of the text to English speakers who do not know Latin.

Fig.36: *Lamentations* Latin and English text setting (bars 31-38)

The musical score for 'Lamentations' (bars 31-38) is presented in a five-staff format. The top staff is for Soprano (S.), followed by another Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.) parts. The tempo/mood is marked 'Ethereal' and the dynamics are 'P' (piano). The score is in 6/8 time and features a complex, mixed-meter ostinato pattern. The English text is set above the Latin text, which is set as an ostinato. The English text reads: 'How lone-ly sits the ci-ty\_ that was once was once'. The Latin text reads: 'Quo-mo-do se-det so - la ci - vi-tas Quo-mo-do se - det so - la ci-vi-tas'. The Tenor and Bass parts are marked 'cont. sim.' (continua similia). The score includes various rhythmic values and rests, with a '3' indicating a triplet in the final measure of each line.

*Harmony*

Again, this piece is based on lines building out from one note, thus the piece contains a lot of modality and diatonicism, but there are no tonal progressions and the harmonies are mainly static. The Latin ostinatos are based on diatonic clusters. The top tenor line is the melody of the riff and is almost always harmonised with stacks of diatonic seconds. In this piece however, the lines sometimes start at fifths

as an homage to the heavy metal power chord. The English material in *Aleph* is also based on building out from one note and diatonic clusters.

Harmonically, *Aleph* is based on A Aeolian. There is a change to B Aeolian at bar 48, but this returns to A Aeolian at 66. There are two sections that include wholetone material in *Aleph*; in bars 39-40 and 62-65. In *Beth*, the harmonies are less stable with bitonality created between Choir 1 and Choir 2. This first occurs from bar 86. Choir 1 has material that starts and ends on A with harmonies based on A Ionian and A Phrygian (bars 86-89). This is followed by a new ostinato riff in Choir 2 based on the notes from Eb Ionian (from bar 90). Above this, at bar 96, Choir 1 repeats the material in bars 86-89, ignorant of the change in harmonies by Choir 2. This idea is then repeated using different words and tonal ideas against each other (the details of which can be found in fig.37), until the piece returns to the *Aleph* material – this time in Bb Aeolian – at bar 144. Bar 166 sees the whole choir singing both languages in near rhythmic unison, but the harmony becomes less diatonic until the piece ends with B flats at octaves.

Fig.37: *Lamentations* Table of Bitonality

Section (bar numbers)	Choir 1: Harmonic language	Choir 2: Harmonic language
90-106	Notes of Eb Ionian	A Ionian and Phrygian
107-126	D harmonic minor	A Aeolian
127-142	B Ionian with a change to G Ionian at 135	B Ionian and Phrygian

### *Rhythm*

The ostinato uses the metric technique from *The Olive Grove*, using alternating duple and triple meters. Though it is the same idea, it appears this time in the form of a repeating pattern as opposed to ever-changing. It is designed in this

piece to be catchy and memorable, like a metal riff, contrasting the English material sung by the sopranos and altos. With regard to the detached English material, it occasionally has important words falling on unusual places of the bar, working against the meter and natural word stress to further contrast the different language materials.

### Musical Heritage

This is another work inspired by heavy metal. The Latin ostinatos serve as a riff, whilst the English material serves as the vocalist would in a metal band, though it sits differently in the texture. The detached feel is in imitation of heavy metal vocalists who scream. The large amount of breath necessary to scream often makes vocal lines quite detached. Furthermore, as screamed vocals have no pitch content, they play a rhythmic role rather than a melodic one, which is the role the sopranos and altos play throughout the *Aleph*. This is inspired by the screams from 'Combustion' by Messhuggah (occurring at about 1'06" of the track), where the vocalist shouts in short and detached phrases.

In the *Aleph*, there is another subtle hint to my heavy metal heritage, namely the idea of an ostinato pattern shifting up a tone, only to shift back down later (see bars 41-62). This is a specific homage to the music of Iron Maiden, who use this technique prolifically. An example of this would be the interlude section of the song 'Sign of the Cross' (from approximately 3'22" until the final chorus at 8'50") off their album *The X factor*. During this section almost all of the riffs and melodies play in their original form, transpose down a tone, and then return back. Another example of these kind of riffs appear in the song 'Dream of Mirrors' from their album *Brave New World* which happens from 5'47" of the track (see fig.38). In my piece however, the

riff moves up a tone instead of down and the riff does not repeat exactly because it changes with the words, but the idea of shifting the harmony up and down is another heavy metal reference to the ease of transposition on guitar, which was also referenced in *Treftadaeth*.

Fig.38: 'Dream of Mirrors' Tone transposition (guitar transposing score)

Electric Guitar

$\text{♩} = 170$

As a criterion was to show awareness of The Tallis Scholars' style, I included some elements of counterpoint in the work. This happens firstly from bar one of *Beth* (bar 80). The alto and first tenor lines enter, starting on a unison E. The alto moves upwards, whilst the tenor harmonises below in seconds until bar 81 where they duet at thirds (see fig.39). The second tenor and second bass enter in a similar manner. Of course, this is not true species counterpoint, and is my interpretation of it as I still include the idea of building out from one note. I felt it was important to include some counterpoint type material in this piece because, as a choral singer, it is part of my musical heritage.

Fig.39: *Lamentations* Counterpoint style material (bars 80-85)

Alto  
Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in noc - te Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in noc - te

Tenor  
Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in noc - te Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in noc - te

Tenor  
Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in noc - te Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in

Bass  
Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in noc - te noc - te

Bass  
Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in noc - te Plo - rans plo - ra - vit in

### Bilingual Music

*Lamentations* is not alone in setting Latin with vernacular. This idea can be traced back to French double and triple motets, so named because each independent melodic line has its own text (Wallmark, 2009). Occasionally some of the texts would be in vernacular French. An example of this appeared in the La Clayette manuscript. The piece, *De la virge Katerine chantera/Quant froidure trait a fin/Agmina milicie celestis/AGMINA*, consists of two sacred texts about Saint Catherine, one Latin and one French, and a secular French text about erotic lust (Huot, 1997, p.50). Intertextuality is placed on the secular text which is about beauty and the eroticisation of the female form. Put in the context of the motet, the text becomes about the virgin Saint's beauty and the fact she is unobtainable.

More modern examples of bilingual choral pieces include:

- Britten's *A Hymn to the Virgin* which takes a macaronic text already in existence and splits it between a chorus and a quartet, dividing the languages similar to *Lamentations*
- *Christus Est Stella Matutina!* by Graham Coatman, written in 2011, takes a Latin text by the Venerable Bede and separates each line with English words taken from John 8:12. Both texts use light as a metaphor for Christ.<sup>22</sup>

*Lamentations* is only bilingual to give more people an understanding of the text, which I believe is part the reason for English in Coatman's work too. That is not the case in the French motet however, where all texts are sung in counterpoint simultaneously, obscuring most of the words and meaning.

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<sup>22</sup> Christus est stella matutina, Qui nocte saeculi transacta, Lucem vitae sanctis promittit, Et pandit aeternam. (Christ is the morning star, who when the night, Of this world is past brings to his saints, The promise of the light of life and opens everlasting day (St Bede's Pastoral Care, n.d.)). John 8.12: I am the light of the world, Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, But will have the light of life (Bible Hub, n.d).

*Sadness and Joy (March 2014 – April 2014)*

*Sadness and Joy* was written for an SATB vocal quartet named Dinner with Elgar. They requested a piece with some link to folk music and elements of my Welsh heritage, to fit in with their recital programme of folk around the world. I worked with many ideas, including the setting of Welsh and English like the bilingual feature in *Lamentations*, before I settled with setting an English poem by Welsh poet, W. H. Davies.

I picked Davies as he was a Welsh poet from my county and he did not speak Welsh, therefore his heritage fits well with my own. I wanted to write another piece that was more personal and serious in tone to end the portfolio; it starts with a personal work and ends with one. The poem is about depression and possibly its role in creativity, specifically as a hindrance to it. With this in mind, I tried to create a piece that carried the poem's mournfulness and depression, whilst also tying it to folk and my musical dialect.

*Music*

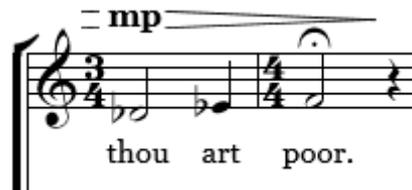
*Harmony and Form*

The piece has three main sections and is similar to the traditional ternary form. The piece starts with harmonic material that is a mixture of whole-tone and F Ionian harmonies which is followed by a faster, mixed-meter middle section based on bimodality. The final section consists of similar material to the first, but borrows metric material from the middle section.

The introduction of the piece consists of mainly whole-tone language with stacked major seconds (bar 3) and parallel movement. Then from the last beat of bar

4, the harmonic language shifts to the notes F Ionian (apart from a chromatic B natural in the bass in bar 5 and a Mixolydian Eb in the bass in bar 7). Over this, from bars 4-8, the soprano sings mainly F wholetone material (creating some bimodality) which contains work's main motif; the rising Db, Eb and F (see fig.40).

Fig.40: *Sadness and Joy* Wholetone/Aeolian motif (7-8)



In the middle section (from bars 35-62) the harmonies are exclusively modal and are based open fifths linking to folk music. However the harmony changes quickly and there are elements of bimodality. For each phrase in that section, every vocal part starts and ends on the same note at octaves. The main melodic line (which is passed between all the parts) is based on the Aeolian mode and moves up the cycle of fifths on each phrase. The harmonic material however, is a fifth ahead along the cycle each time. The section starts with the tenor singing an A Aeolian melody, meanwhile the harmony underneath uses the notes of D Aeolian (starting on an A), resulting in false relations between the melodic and harmonic materials (fig.41 shows the harmonic material of every phrase in this section). The material then from bars 64 to 74 is a linking passage between this middle section and the opening material, which returns at a faster tempo.

Fig.41: Sadness and Joy Table of Bimodality

Phrase	Melodic mode (singer)	Accompaniment mode
1 (bars 35-38)	A Aeolian (tenor)	A Phrygian (D Aeolian)
2 (bars 38 [beat 4] -41)	D Aeolian (tenor)	D Phrygian (G Aeolian)
3 (bars 41 [beat 3] -44)	G Aeolian (alto)	G Phrygian (C Aeolian)
4 (bars 44 [beat 3] -47)	C Aeolian (alto)	C Phrygian (F Aeolian)
5 (bars 50-54)	F Aeolian (soprano)	F Phrygian (Bb Aeolian)
6 (bars 54 [beat 3] -56)	Bb Aeolian (bass)	Bb Phrygian (Eb Aeolian)
7 (bars 56 [beat 7] -58)	Eb Aeolian (bass)	Eb Phrygian (Ab Aeolian)
8 (bars 58 [beat 7] -62)	F Ionian/Wholetone	F Ionian/Wholetone

### *Arrangement*

Again this piece uses the building out idea. The technique finds a different form again in this work as it is used to highlight the textures possible with this particular group of voices. The quartet's tenor is more of a baritone, with a good low end as well as a strong falsetto with a high range. The alto is male and sings with falsetto, but he also has a strong chest voice with a baritone register. The soprano also has a low reaching voice and doubles as an alto. This piece is tailored to these unique voices in the arrangement. For instance, from bar 14, the bass becomes soloistic, while the others form a trio building out from the same note, towards the top of the tenor's comfortable chest range (see fig.42). Later, from 23, the soprano

takes on a melodic role, while the lower three voices sing below, building out from the same note moving to lower end of all three men's registers at bar 32 (see fig.43).

Fig.42: *Sadness and Joy* Building out technique (bars 14-18)

Figure 42 shows a musical score for four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in 3/4 time. The lyrics are "One hour with thee is sweet e-nough". The score illustrates the "Building out technique" with dynamic markings *p*, *mp*, and *mf* across the four parts. The Soprano part starts with a rest, then enters in bar 14. The Alto and Tenor parts enter in bar 15. The Bass part enters in bar 16. The dynamics increase from *p* to *mp* to *mf* across the parts.

Fig.43: *Sadness and Joy* Building out technique 2 (bars 28-35)

Figure 43 shows a musical score for four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in 3/4 time. The lyrics are "We mourn the e-vil done". The score illustrates the "Building out technique 2" with dynamic markings *mp*, *p*, and *pp*. The Soprano part starts with a rest, then enters in bar 28. The Alto and Tenor parts enter in bar 29. The Bass part enters in bar 30. The dynamics decrease from *mp* to *p* to *pp* across the parts.

### Musical Heritage

This work is another that uses the changing meter text setting technique, and because of this the middle section could sound related to metal as well as folk. As mentioned previously, the type of changing meters this technique creates are similar

to those found in metal, therefore the changing meter in conjunction with parallel open fifths (that are the same as guitar power chords found in metal, consisting of a tonic, fifth and sometimes an octave) could sound like metal as well as folk. This aspect really depends on a listener and which genre they know the best.

## V. Conclusion

The main aim of my research was, as the title says, to explore musical dialect, with specific reference to tradition, heritage and vernacular. I have done this by writing music that includes the following elements:

### *Tradition*

- the use of tonality
- the use of non-complex, rational rhythms
- the use of traditional ensembles
- the inclusion of tradition via genre parody

### *Heritage*

- references to heavy metal in my musical dialect
- references to folk music
- references modern art music
- references to my heritage as an English-speaking Welshman

### *Vernacular*

- the use of modern, informal English
- the use of Welsh
- the use of my own harmonic style
- the development of the building out technique
- the development of the changing meter text setting technique

The motivation for this research was to start creating my own style as a composer as well as trying to create music that was more authentic, rather than continuing writing different music for myself than what I did for university; I've worked with my influences to create music that is a truer display of my personality.

As the analyses of the pieces show, my musical tastes are less disparate than I originally thought. There are many stylistic attributes that crossover between metal, folk, art music and barbershop music; their differences mainly lie in the type of audience each garners and the way the styles are performed and distributed. I believe I have achieved my goal of reconciling my contradicting influences and have managed to create works that integrate these differing styles, without them sounding out of place.

With regard to study of tradition, choosing to write in the art music idiom means that a certain amount of tradition is imposed on one's music from the start. I still believe that my music remains close to traditional Western art music, especially with the music of composers that still worked with tonality around the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but by adding aspects of my musical heritage to my works, creating my own style based on techniques taken from these genres, and from using modern vernacular English in my works, I've managed to create music that still uses traditional forms, ensembles and harmonic techniques without it sounding old or dated. As composer Laurence Crane said:

There is such a diffusion of styles and approaches to writing music in the 21st century. 'Contemporary music' ...whatever that is... is not really one thing anymore. Tonal or diatonic materials are as valid now as atonal materials. (Crane, cited in Sinfini Music, 2014)

The beauty of writing music at this time is that anything is 'valid' and though I still feel connected to tradition, it appears from my research that this is true for some other modern composers.

As for the idea of heritage, tying my music to elements of metal and folk has aided my endeavour towards creating my own style, but connecting works with my

Welsh heritage has also helped. At the premiere of *Sadness and Joy* an audience member commented on the fact that it was so beautifully sad and emotional. My connection with the author helped me get involved with the text and do it justice by creating personal and emotive music.

The study of musical vernacular has allowed me to think more about my own style and what I can incorporate into my music. I believe I have successfully managed to integrate elements of my musical heritage into my vernacular. It has helped me think more about the music I write, as I question why I am writing a certain way and how it relates to my music on a larger scale. Whilst looking at other artists' styles, I have started to work towards crafting my own authentic style, some elements of which have already become clear.

My use of linguistic vernacular has also been successful when attempting to put my personality into my work, especially with the humour in the haikus. Vernacular was also helpful to paint the story of *The Olive Grove*. The performing choir enjoyed the story of the work and it helped them give an effective performance. It was important to use the kind of language I speak to help me write authentic music.

Concluding this project, I feel like I have made a good start towards creating a musical dialect. I believe I have successfully created modern sounding music that uses traditional forms and incorporates my metal and folk musical heritage, whilst tying the project to the use of vernacular.

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